

MOTORCYCLE SYNDROME

Young men who drive motorcycles, are they any different from those who don't?

Dr. Armand M. Nicholi Jr., Harvard psychiatrist, became interested in nine college students who were undergoing psychotherapy. All nine were unusually preoccupied with motorcycles, and Dr. Nicholi began wondering why.

He observed that the nine were frequently worried about possible impotence, homosexuality, fear of aggressive women, bodily injury, and other implicating characteristics. He classified them as suffering from the "motorcycle syndrome."

For such young men, Dr. Nicholi believes, the motorcycle "is a powerful emotional prosthesis for the masculine part of his personality. The patient

suffers from a serious ego defect, causing him to see the motorcycle as an essential part of his body image. He cannot give it up: 'If I get rid of it, there will be nothing but me, and I fear that is not enough.'"

At the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, Dr. Nicholi made clear that there are plenty of healthy motorcyclists, but that those suffering from the motorcycle syndrome should be recognized and treated quickly in an attempt to reduce the sharply mounting rate of motorcycle accidents and deaths in this country.

"Two years ago," Dr. Nicholi pointed out, "2000 people were killed in motorcycle accidents and a quarter of a million injured. Next year, 5000 people will be killed and close to a million injured in such accidents."



A SCENE FROM AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL PICTURES' "HELL'S ANGELS '69," ONE OF SEVERAL FILMS CONCERNED WITH AMERICA'S MOTORCYCLE GANGS.

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